REMARKS

Claims 1-20 were presented for examination in the present application. The instant amendment cancels non-elected claims 1-7 and 18-20 without prejudice and adds new claims 21-22. Thus, claims 8-17 and 21-22 are presented for consideration upon entry of the instant amendment.

Applicant respectfully reserves the right to file a divisional application directed to the subject matter of the non-elected claims.

The Office Action requires restriction among the connecting member of Group I (claims 1-7), the connecting member of Group II (claims 8-14), the connected assembly of Group III (claims 15-17), and the method of Group IV (claims 18-20).

Applicant elects, with traverse, the invention of Group II, which includes claims 8-14. Specifically, Applicant requests examination of the connected assembly of Group III (claims 15-17) along with the examination of the connecting member of Group II.

If the search and examination of an entire application can be made without serious burden, the examiner must examine it on the merits, even though it includes claims to independent or distinct inventions. See MPEP 803.

It is respectfully submitted that searching and examining the subject matter of Group III, which is related to Group II as a combination, along with elected Group II does not place a serious burden on the Examiner. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the Requirement for Restriction to Group III (claims 15-17) and, thus, requests examination on the merits of claims 8-17.

Claims 21-22 have been added to point out various aspects of the present application. It is submitted that new claims 21-22 are directed to the elected embodiment of Group II. Support for new claims 21-22 can be found at least in original

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claims 1-20.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for examination. Applicant respectfully requests favorable consideration and passage of this application to allowance.

If for any reason the Examiner feels that consultation with Applicant's attorney would be helpful in the advancement of the prosecution, the Examiner is invited to call the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,

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